

## **The Early Days of Clover Valley and Alden,** as Recollected by Anton Martinson and Written in 1967

*(from the February 1973 "Landmarks", provided by resident Helen Hendrickson.)*

**B**eing the oldest settler in this area, I thought it may be of some interest to someone to know when the first settlers moved in.

In the winter of 1892 three men filed on homesteads. One by the name of Alfred Swanson, built their home where the Al Pearson's house now stands and Chas. Rosen built their house where the Henry Schumann home is (*these were on either side of Homestead at the West Knife River Road*), and the third man being my father, built a half mile south and back a quarter of a mile in from where the Homestead Road is now located (*along the river*). My father's first name was Martin.

The Alfred Swanson and Chas. Rosen families moved up in the late winter and my folks moved in in June 1892. We came in from Knife River over a sort of road through the heavy timber. A team of oxen and sort of sled was used for transportation. I was eighteen months old so I do not have any recollection of it at all. I had two sisters older than me, who perhaps remembered the first ride in.

The mosquitoes were one of the main problems in the early days. Smoke smudges were the best repellent known at that time. At night they used cheese cloth covers that they built over the beds about three feet high and then run pieces between the corner sticks and hung the cheese cloth over that. It made a good protection providing a few mosquitoes did not get in too.

About the first project the beginners had, was to cut out a road straight down to Palmers. It was in 1894 that they got it cut through but it wasn't graded till some time later.

And, of course, they had to have a school for the children that were old enough, so a little log building was erected and a teacher hired. The teacher was paid \$35 a month and paid \$12 a month for room and board.

During this time they cleared a little more land which was slow as the timber was quite heavy and there wasn't any money for dynamite to blast out the stumps with. But stumps weren't too big a handicap as the hay was all cut by hand. They could cut some hay on the meadows that the beavers had made by damming up the streams.

To make a few dollars in winter, they would get out some (railroad) ties, etc. Several years later, bigger loggers came in. My folks sold the stumpage on their 120 acres for \$200. When spring came, the \$200 was paid by letting my dad go into the logger's barn to pick out any team in the barn. He picked out a young black team which we had for some time. I can still remember their names—Nelley and Nigh. They were a wonderful team and helped in breaking up more fields.

Around 1889 or so, a family by the name of Agnew came up from Superior and built quite a large steam sawmill across the road from where the Clover Valley School is located now. It operated for some time and finally the mill was made into a shingle mill. It was run as such for several years till the man who operated it was killed in an accident. His son then ran it for awhile, but finally one morning it caught fire and that was the end of the mill. The two boilers stood there a long time but finally were hauled away.

During these years, a few new settlers had moved in, so the Post Office Dept. saw the necessity of starting a post office up here (*east of former store at the north end of Homestead Road*). It wasn't a very elaborate post office but it served the purpose for quite a few years. The man from the P.O. Dept. asked the man who they'd appointed to be the postmaster, Halver Halversen, what they should call it, and as he had come from a place in Norway by the name of Molde, he suggested that the place be called Molde. A fellow by the name of Archie Larvie carried the mail twice a week across the woods to Knife River. It was later changed to 3 times a week, and as the mail started getting heavier, a horse and buggy (and cutter in winter) was used. A Mrs. Duncan drove the mail for quite a few years. She was a daughter of the Swansons and one of the first children up here. Then as more people came, a farmers'

club was started and about the first thing they did was change the name of Molde to Clover Valley which name has stuck ever since. After that the rural free delivery route was started out of French River. Matt Jackson who was the section foreman for the railroad, got the postmasters job beside. He operated a little store along with the post office. Eventually the mail route was enlarged and a part of the area was put on a Duluth route and the rest was put on the Two Harbors route.

The farmers' club started talking about putting in a telephone in 1913. Each farmer cut and set seven poles then a couple of men who had moved up from Iowa and who had experience with telephone work were hired to hang the wire and install the phones. Connection was made at Palmers to the railroad telephone. It served the purpose for a good many years until it was settled heavier here. Then the Duluth Bell System took over and put in a modern system which gave everyone a chance to have a phone and it has worked out very well.

Going back a few years now, some people started moving up in Alden. It was still part of the Town of Duluth then, but later this township was divided and the Town of Alden was born. The Driscoll's two families and the Lucci family came down from Virginia, coming in from Westover on the Alger Smith Railroad out of Knife River. I would say this was about 1913 or so. Then a little south of the Driscoll's and Lucci's a man named Oscar Laine, I believe, was the first one to move in. Then it started settling quite fast and a road had to be built to give these new settlers a way to get in & out.

More settlers started coming in and the need for a meeting place for dances, etc. developed so a hall was built on the corner of the App Road and North Knife River Road about a mile west of Thor Borgen's home (*on the Two Harbors road where Sherry's Berries is now*). It got to be known as the Molde Hall. This was during prohibition days and like most everywhere, moonshine liquor got to be a big thing and these dances got to be quite wild on Saturday nights. This hall got to be quite a notable place and people came, both good and bad, to see what it was like. But as the years went by, and prohibition ended, it sort of died away and eventually the hall was torn down.

Some nice little farms were developed with nice homes through the area. Most all had a small herd of cows but then the Second World War came on and the demand for labor on the docks and shop in Two Harbors became greater, the men most all went to work for the railroad and their wives stayed home and milked the cows. As the years went by, farming sort of came to an end. Many of the original settlers had either died or moved away. A new generation of younger people came and bought a lot of the homes just for a place to live. Most were employed at Silver Bay in the taconite industry.

The story was much the same in the Town of Duluth. The schools were being enlarged every so often. The older part of Clover Valley was built in 1929, the new addition was built in 1953.

The main roads were widened about 1934 and 1935 and blacktopped several years later. The high line was built out of Two Harbors in 1937 and in 1938.

When the present town hall was built on the corner of the Shelton Road, some thirty years ago, the Ladies Aid bought the old hall half a mile south of the Clover Valley School (*between the Aho and Torgerson roads*) and converted it into a church (*later converted to a home*).

This about covers a brief history of the Clover Valley area. I have not mentioned many people by name—only the first ones in the various areas. I am not sure that this will be of much interest to anyone, but in case it should, it has brought back many memories to me in writing it down.

*Anton Martinson, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967*

*(Mr. Anton Martinson was 82 years old when his article was first published in "The Landmarks". He died in 1977 at the age of 87).*